Image Credit: Araluen Schunmann

Change Requests: How to Guide

It is assumed that you have already read the guidance provided at the end of the Change Request form, which can be found on the Change Requests page under the Resources section on all Biodiversity Challenge Fund websites:

- **Darwin Initiative**
- **Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund**
- **Darwin Plus**

This guide explains how to fill out a Change Request form.

> ## Remember
> The financial year runs from
> **1st April to 31st March**
> for all Biodiversity Challenge Fund projects.

Frequently asked questions

Why submit a Change Request (CR)?

If you need to make any changes to your project that involve information provided at application stage or which has been agreed following approval of funding. More detail on what needs approval can be found at the back of the form itself.

When to submit a Change Request?

As soon as you are aware a change is needed - do not delay submission as this could suggest you are not managing your project efficiently. All Financial CRs should be submitted **by 31st December** of any financial year. While Defra may review submissions after this date, approval is less likely unless you can clearly demonstrate unforeseen circumstances that justify the delay.

How to complete a CR?

The form contains general guidance that is important to read before you start, to help you understand the process and any associated restrictions, as well as the additional information you may need to submit.

Do I need a CR for each request I have?

If you need to request multiple changes, you can include them all on a single form. This is especially helpful when one change impacts another - for example, budget adjustments might affect your workplan timeline or logframe. If making more than one request in the same CR, think about how to set it out clearly. You may want to use consistent numbering, or bullets or headings to identify which part of the request the text refers to. Presenting them in the same way and order throughout will make it easier for us to review and likely quicker to process.
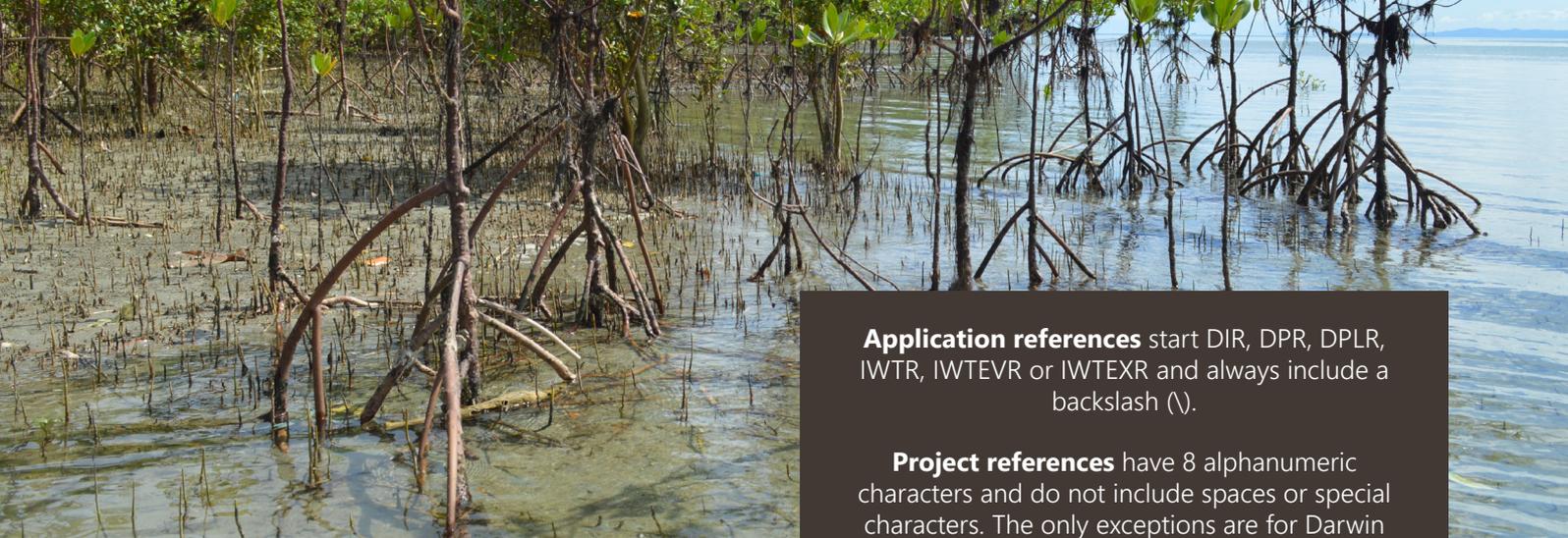
Application references start DIR, DPR, DPLR, IWTR, IWTEVR or IWTEXR and always include a backslash (\).

Project references have 8 alphanumeric characters and do not include spaces or special characters. The only exceptions are for Darwin Initiative Main projects which follow the format 31-030 or DAR31030 and IWT Challenge Fund Main projects which follow the format IWT987. Project references can be found in your award paperwork.

Getting started

The following sections work through the form on a step by step basis:

Do not complete anything on the form above this section, only fill in the form from this section onwards.

Application for Approval to Change a Biodiversity Challenge Funds Project

Before completing this Change Request, please read the Guidance at the end of this document

Please indicate the type of Change Request: Financial* ☐   Other ☐
any change which requires movement of funds between financial years

Project Ref and Title	
Request from (name and organisation)	
Email address	

Please confirm you have read the Change Request guidance at the end of this document and understand that there is no guarantee a request will be granted ☐

This section provides us with the details we need to know: Which project the CR is about and who to contact.

Read the explanation of the difference between 'Financial' and 'Other' CRs and decide which applies to your request and mark the appropriate box.

It is only 'Financial' if you are moving funds between financial years, but your request may cover multiple changes. You can submit a CR that covers both Financial and Other on the same form.

Complete the three rows with the project information requested:

- Use the Project Reference which is confirmed at the Award stage (do not use the application reference) and include the Title of the project as used on the application form (unless a change has been agreed).

- The Request should come from someone we know is associated with the project – usually the Project Leader or Project Manager / Officer (or equivalent). This person would normally have been named in the application form or in the budget or been agreed as an addition through a previous CR. This helps us ensure that the request is genuine and from a known source.

- Remember to tick the box at the end of the section in **red** type confirming you have read the CR guidance.

Why do you need to submit a Change Request?

This section provides us with a simple summary of the change you want to make.

> **Why do you need to submit this Change Request?**
>
> Please provide a short explanation of **why you need to submit this request**. Remember that we do not know your project in detail so you should provide enough information to allow us to understand the situation.

Provide a brief explanation of why you need to make the request. You do not need to provide the full background to the project, or refer to previous requests unless it is relevant to the request itself. The following questions in the form allow you to provide more detail so try to avoid repetition. It might be useful to read the form through and see what you think needs to go where, before starting.

Finance example: You need to revise the timing of some activities which moves some work/costs into a different financial year.	**Non-Financial example:** A member of the team has left and you need to replace them.

What changes do you want to make?

This section helps us to understand what you want to change and how it is different to what was agreed. Again, sections below this ask for more detail so do not duplicate.

> **What specific change(s) do you want to make? How is this different to what is currently agreed?**
>
> Please clearly identify what you need to change. If there are multiple proposed changes you may wish to use a numbered list. You do not need to provide a lot of explanation in this section.
>
> If your change impacts your logframe, please attach a copy of your current agreed logframe with your proposed changes made **in tracked changes.** You can find a blank logframe in the resources section of each website, in the same section as the CR template. If your CR involves changing staff, please attach CVs for new staff members.

As noted above, you might want to use numbers or bullets – or perhaps consider whether a table would help to show the changes – this might work well for financial changes for different budget lines, for example.

Finance example:
1. Significant temperatures and the lack of normal seasonal rain means we could not plant in Q3 as planned and need to move this to Q4. This impacts the work planned for Q4 which will now need to move into the next financial year.
2. We also request an extension of our end date from 31st December 2026 to 31st March 2027.

Non-Financial example:
Daisy Jones has left the project and we would like to replace her with Michael Smith (CV attached).

Please note we do not need to know why Daisy has left the project unless there is a specific project-related reason. While we do not necessarily need to know about the challenges in detail, the request should be clear why you can't do the work as planned.

Image Credit: Michael Brombacher

Why do you need to make changes?

This section tells us more about the change(s) you want to make and why they are needed to help us make a final decision.

Please clearly justify why you need to make a change?

Where appropriate please reference your approach to risk management, and why you have been unable to mitigate this risk.

If this is a **Financial Change Request**, please explain when you first became aware of the issue and why this Change Request is **exceptional**. If this is a **Financial Change Request** being submitted **after 31st December or for a past financial year**, then please justify why it is late.

This is one of the most important sections to get right. This is where you explain **why** you need to make the change and support it with **updated information** – and/or explain how you have been managing the changes and why you are not able to continue as before.

This is where you need to be clear on your justification for change, particularly for financial change.

Consider what information you submitted with your application and what changes will be needed in light of this request. Provide the relevant updated information so that we can agree your new approach and know that the project has revised its plans.

There may be several good reasons you can use here, but you should show how you have thought about the challenge you are facing, have considered your options, and why you are proposing the request being made here i.e. why is this the best solution for your project?

It is particularly important to provide a clear timeline, allowing us to understand how long the issue has been ongoing.

Updated information that maybe be required:
- Updated budget
- Updated logframe in tracked changes
- Updated workplan
- CV of replacement staff

Finance example:
1. Seasonal rains were due in Q2 but have not yet arrived. We have been monitoring and expecting rain for several months, but have now reached a point where we recognise we need to revise our project plans. We cannot plant until it has rained as the plants would not survive without the rain. We had hoped the rain would come by December and we could have caught up by the end of March, but we have now reached a point of acceptance that we cannot complete the planting and subsequent activities before the end of March.
2. By extending the end of the project, we will allow ourselves a few additional months to be able to finalise our project.

Non-Financial example:
Daisy Jones is no longer available to do the work of Project Manager. Michael Smith has been working on the project already and understands how it works and is ready to step up to take on this role. We have confidence in his ability to do so. His current work can be spread across the other members of the team allowing him the freedom to focus on the role of PM.

Image Credit: TRAFFIC
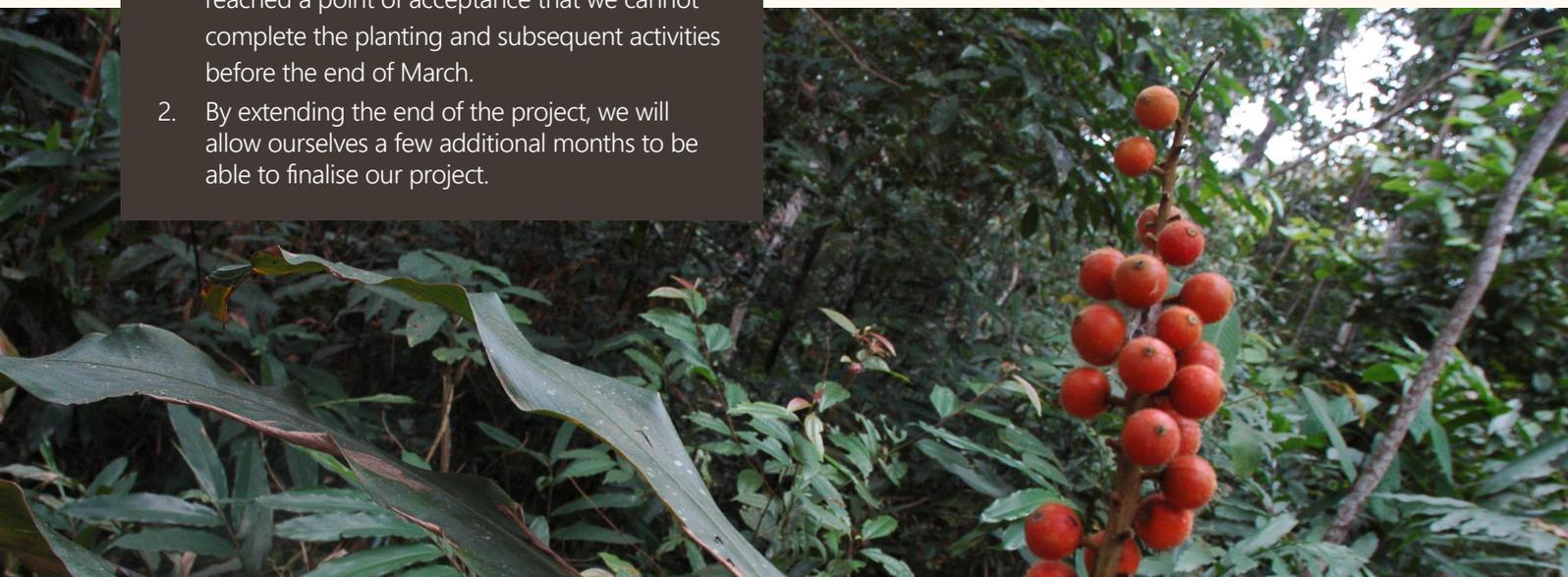
How have you tried to solve the problem?

This section reassures us that you have considered the alternatives and have made the best decision for the project.

> **What actions have you taken to prevent the need for this Change Request?**
> We expect you to have attempted and/or assessed alternative actions to reduce or eliminate the need to submit this Change Request. Please clearly outline what these were and why they are not viable. For example, have you considered a different approach to matched funding timing or accelerating other workstreams/activities?

You should be able to show the decisions you have made along the way and demonstrate you have been managing the challenges and considering the alternatives. You should outline the other options you have considered and briefly explain why you do not think they are the best option for the project.

Finance example:
We have had fortnightly meetings to review our plans and the likelihood of rain. We considered planting test areas, but felt that until rain was more realistic, this would be a waste of resources. In the meantime, we have picked up other project work (e.g. preparation for reporting) to keep staff busy and to allow them to be available when needed for planting.

Non-Financial example:
We considered recruiting a new PM, but that would have taken time that the project cannot afford at this point. We reviewed other team members who may have been able to step up to the role, but Michael was the best candidate and allows the PM to be available when needed for planting.

What will happen if the Change Request is rejected?

This section helps us understand the impact of our decision if we are not able to agree this CR.

> **If this Change Request is rejected, what will still be deliverable in terms of the Outputs and Outcome of your project?**
>
> We understand that changes are likely to impact the Outputs and Outcome of project. Please set out what can be still achieved or delivered, and what might not, if this Change Request is rejected. Ideally please refer to specific indicators and targets in your logframe.

Be as clear as you can about what you think can still be achieved, and what will not be delivered.

Finance example:
If we cannot move the planting activities to Q4, then we will have lost the chance to plant this year. We will essentially lose a year of plant growth so will not be able to achieve what we set out as our Outcome for the project. This will impact our ability to achieve Output 2 and Outcome indicators 0.3 and 0.4.

Non-Financial example:
Without a Project Manager, the Project Leader will have to take on more work and allocate some tasks to different team members who are already fully committed. This would overwork the existing team and may lead to illness or others leaving the team. The project may need to consider dropping X, Y and Z which are the areas of the project which are least advanced at this point.

Image Credit: Julian Tyne

Previous financial Change Requests

If you are submitting a financial request or a change of project dates, you must complete this section.

Change Request 1

CRYY-XX	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Start/end dates/ Comments
Current Budget					
Revised Budget					
Difference					

Change Request 2

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Start/end dates/ Comments
Current Budget					
Revised Budget					
Difference					

This section shows us what previous Financial requests have been agreed and helps us to see, in one place, what your history of financial change has been. Several significant changes near the end of the year may raise questions regarding your financial management and your internal forecasting. However, the decision on each request is based on the information provided in that CR.

You should complete as many boxes as are relevant for previous agreed Financial requests. We do not need them for non-Financial changes, such as the movement of funds within the same financial year.

The yellow box at the top of the table should be completed with the reference we have provided in the email confirming any previous financial CR.

The information presented in these tables for agreed previous requests should reflect the actual figures agreed – not necessarily the figures you provided for that request. See explanation below.

Financial example – this is how to show a previously agreed CR:

CR23-187	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	Start/end dates/ Comments
Current Budget	134,923	97,574	97,456	From 01/04/2024 to 31/12/2026
Revised Budget	**130,923**	**101,574**	**97,456**	From 01/04/2024 to 31/12/2026
Difference	*–4,000*	*+4,000*	*–*	

You should keep a clear record of all the changes agreed for your project. This will help you manage your project better, and is also part of the agreed changes referenced in the Terms and Conditions of award.

All Financial CR references take the format CR24-234 (Financial Request 234 in the financial year 2024-25).

All non-Financial references take the format N0999 – being the 999th non-financial request. These do not relate to financial years but are an ongoing increasing number. We will provide this reference in emails confirming agreement – for your records.

New Financial Change Requests

This Change Request					
	2024-25	**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**Start/end dates/ Comments**
Current Budget					
Revised Budget					
Difference					

This section summarises the financial changes you want to make.

You should complete this table (we will complete the yellow box) with the detail relating to the CR you are submitting. Check the financial years reflect your project years and update if necessary. You must show your budget figures under the correct financial year.

Under Current Budget show the figures that are the latest agreed figures for your project. These will match any previously agreed figures or, if this is your first request, will match your original budget figures.

Under Revised Budget show the figures that you want to change to.

The Difference row should show the difference between the Current Budget and the Revised budget you are asking for.

The figures shown for the Current Budget and for the Revised Budget should always add up to the same total (they don't need to include the full project budget). This means that the figures appearing in the "Difference" row should always add up to 0.

Financial example:

This Change Request				
	2024-25	**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**Start/end dates/ Comments**
Current Budget	130,923	101,574	97,456	From 01/04/2024 to 31/12/2026
Revised Budget	**110,923**	**106,574**	**112,456**	From 01/04/2024 **to 31/03/2027**
Difference	*-20,000*	*+5,000*	*+15,000*	

In 2024-25 you have a current budget of £130,923 and want to reduce it to £110,923 the difference is -£20,000. In 2025-26 you want to add £5,000 and in 2026-27 you want to add £15,000. These two figures would appear as +£5,000 and +£15,000. So the addition of those figures shows the £20,000 removed from the first year is fully spread across the next two years with no balance remaining.

N.B.: Do not use a CR to surrender funds: if you know you have not used all your funds in one year, and do not want to make a case to move them to another financial year, you submit them through your end of year Actual claim.

We will check the figures you provide in the current CR against our records and ensure they match. The example above shows some changes in orange which reflect amendments to ensure the arithmetic of the request is correct i.e. that the figures all add up correctly both within each financial year and across each row.
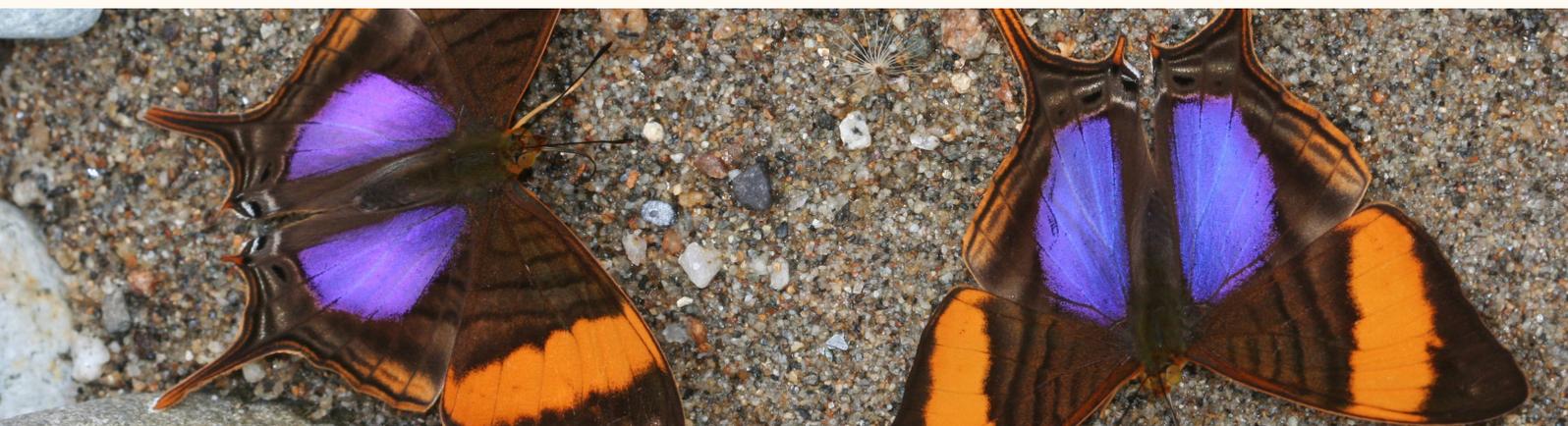
Image Credit: K.Willmott

If the Change Request is accepted

This table confirms what your revised budget would look like if we agree the CR and gives us reassurance that the project has a fully revised budget in place.

Split of revised budget requested for each Financial Year changed	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Staff Costs				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead costs				
Travel & Subsistence				
Operating costs				
Capital Equipment				
Other costs				
End of project audit fee				
TOTAL				

If you are moving funds between financial years, you **must** provide an updated budget: at a minimum you must complete the table above to show how your funds will be split at the highest levels. Alternatively, you can submit a revised budget spreadsheet. We need to be able to see the impact of the changes you are suggesting to the high level spread of your annual awards, to have a clear record of those changes and to know that you also have an updated budget to work from. This helps us to understand any changes in profile of your spend.

Other things to consider

- If you are making significant changes to your project, do you need to update your Risk Register? You do not need to submit it with the CR, but it may be a good opportunity to revise it.

- Do these changes influence your delivery chain map and the split of funds to partners?

- Ensure that the project team knows how to identify the current version of any agreed documents and how they can access them.

- Consider how you communicate budget changes to your finance team if they are not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of your project (more relevant to larger organisations).

What happens next?

We may come back to you with questions if anything is not clear or supporting information is missing.

We aim to respond to your request **within 10 working days**, but at peak times this is not always possible. Sometimes we need to request additional support to make final decisions. We will respond to you as quickly as we are able to. If your request is particularly time sensitive, please make this clear.